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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 000544SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA NSC FOR PASCUAL AND KUCHTA-HELBLING LONDON FOR SREEBNEYE.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2029

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KIRF](#) [KWMN](#) [SOCI](#) [EG](#)

BLOGGERS MOVING FROM ACTIVISM TO BROADENING DISCOURSE AND SELF-EXPRESSION

REF: A. CAIRO 468 B. CAIRO 243 C. CAIRO 229 D. CAIRO 152 E. 08 CAIRO 2403 F. 08 CAIRO 1973 G. 08 CAIRO 783 H. 07 CAIRO 3214 I. 06 CAIRO 3161

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reason 1.4 (d).

1. KEY POINTS - (C) Egypt's bloggers are playing an increasingly important role in broadening the scope of acceptable political and social discourse. (C) Bloggers' discussions of sensitive issues, such as sexual harassment, sectarian tension and the military, represent a significant change in Egyptian public discourse. (C) The role of bloggers as a cohesive activist movement has largely disappeared, due to a more restrictive political climate, GOE counter-terrorist operations and the arrest of bloggers. (C) However, individual bloggers have continued to work to expose problems such as police brutality and corporate malfeasance.

2. (C) Comment: The government generally allows bloggers wide latitude in posting material critical of the GOE. Exceptions to this policy are bloggers who directly insult President Mubarak or Islam, and the government has arrested and jailed bloggers who

The Current State of Blogging

3. (C) Egypt has an estimated 160,000 bloggers who write in Arabic, and sometimes in English, about a wide variety of topics, from social life

Expanding Discourse and Personal Expression -----

4. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX told us that blogging allows Egyptian youth to air their views about social and political issues in ways that were "unimaginable" just a few years ago. CAIRO 00000544 002 OF 003

5. (C) Two young upper middle-class bloggers told us that expressing themselves on their blogs is a "bright spot" for them in the current atmosphere of repression.

Relationship with the Independent Media

6. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX noted that the open atmosphere created by bloggers has positively influenced the independent media, especially satellite television.

Originally an Activist Movement

7. (C) While the voices of individual bloggers are currently making their mark on expanding public discourse and personal expression, bloggers

8. (C) Since 2006, XXXXXXXXXXXX said, bloggers have not been able to replicate the same kind of political activism for a number of reasons. He

9. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX explained that as political activism waned after 2006, bloggers lost their context for advocacy. He concluded that there is a current "despondency" among bloggers, which is reflected in their focus on personal expression rather than activism. Human rights activist XXXXXXXXXXXX separately echoed XXXXXXXXXXXX's assessment, opining that there is a current "despondency" among bloggers, which is reflected in their focus on personal expression rather than activism.

Bloggers as Human Rights Activists

CAIRO 00000544 003 OF 003

10. (C) While XXXXXXXXXXXX minimizes bloggers' current impact as activists, veteran civil society advocates view bloggers' contributions as significant. XXXXXXXXXXXX stressed the importance of bloggers' concern with torture and press freedom. At a public lecture XX

11. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX cited the "3,000 hits per day" on XXXXXXXXXXXX's blog as evidence of his influence, asserting that XXXXXXXXXXXX is more widely known than he is. SCOBEEY